

**Wellness and support system for international students at
HAAGA-HELIA University of applied sciences.**

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Abstract <p>Adjusting to different environment is common among international students. The practical adaptation problems are, academic, financial, language, housing, cultural shock and integration. Being social is important in improving academic performance and lifelong learning. Personal and social problems that occur in a student's life affect most students in the areas of peer acceptance, social activities, integration that leads to depression and students dropping out from school eventually. HH through the wellbeing services provides counseling, activities and support but most international students neglect these services. International students should have better understanding of self-awareness, social awareness, responsible decision-making, self-management and relationship management skills. All these will lead to a better feeling of social acceptance, social perception, social integration and contribution. This gives a holistic feeling of wellness prevents depression and dropping out while studying at HAAGA –HELIA university of applied sciences.</p> <p>A structured interview session was conducted with specific members of the wellbeing services of HH in May 2013. The interviewed shared their experiences, personal thoughts and offered different recommendations that are of use to both the student and the University. The content analysis method of coding was used to summarize and arrive at the findings from the interview. Keywords, International students, wellness,integration,social &peer support, and HAAGA-HELIA wellbeing services.</p>	

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1 Background

For most students who have crossed the world to try and settle into a degree programme, it's always shocking to discover that every aspect of their daily lives like looking for accommodation, understanding lectures, assignments and classmates can be very difficult. In this kind of situation, students end up focusing only on what is essential, in ways that can actually prevent them from finding some of the solutions on offer.

HAAGA-HELIA University of applied sciences offers a diverse and exciting study environment with 1000 international degree students representing 100 different nationalities and 350 exchange students every year.

Aware that there are brochures, web –pages, orientation programmes which inform student that a lot of support and services have been created and developed for the wellbeing of students. Most students tend to ignore this information, which means that they may not use or look out for these services. Some student might find it hard to cope in an international learning environment due to cultural differences, age differences, learning disabilities etc, which can results to isolation and separation. The more students isolate themselves from social activities and support groups the more their overall wellness suffers such students have a high risk of becoming depressed.

I became interested in this topic based on my observation that most International students do not partake fully in HAAGA-HELIA social activities, and they do not ask for help from the university support services, thereby abandoning great opportunities to integrate properly.

Self-evaluation will make students more mentally prepared and improve the awareness of the need to contribute positively and interact with other students effectively. International student tend to suffer most, these set of student become more isolated from the school community and might drop out eventually. At the beginning of every class, everyone is new to each other, this case is more severe in an international class with different cultures, age, and sex.

The background to this study includes the role social, psychological and emotional wellbeing plays in the lives of international students. The concept of wellness among students encompasses many of the non-academic factors associated with academic success. These areas may include the ability to cope with stressful situations, creativity, self-identity, physical well-being and supportive relationships (Myers & Sweeney 2005).

Leafgran (1989) suggested that students who are emotionally and socially healthy have a greater chance to succeed in college. Schools are special places and learning is a social process. Student learns in collaboration with teachers, in the company of peers and support of families.

Forman (1988) believes that social support and educational placement is a predictor of scholastic competence, conduct, athletic competition, physical appearance, general self worth and self-esteem. Malecki and Elliot (1999) found a positive relationship between academic performance, educational focus, social skills, self-concept and social support. I believe that self-awareness is socially mediated, which means it can occur along side with social relationships. Different researchers have found that prosocial behavior in the classroom is linked with positive intellectual outcomes (Diperna & Elliot 1999). Equally, researchers found out that antisocial conduct often occurs with poor academic performance (Hawkins et al 1998). In the past research has suggested that behavioral tendencies reflected in personality traits affect certain habits that can have an influence on academic success.

King, Rosthstein, Paunonen, Rush (1994) argued that evaluations in an academic programme are influenced by characteristic modes of behavior such as, talkativeness, dominance, perseverance, conscientiousness, individual differences in specific personality traits can be related to scholastic success. In Emotional Intelligence Daniel Goleman (1995) states, that social and emotional intelligence is a different way of being smart. Different studies about the welfare and challenges of international students in Finland have been made in the past.

If student in Finland with learning or integration problems could open up and take advantage of the support offered by the institutions, they could have a better feeling of self worth. The presence of social support could significantly predict an individual's ability to cope with stress, knowing that others value one is an important psychological factor that can help one to forget the negative aspects of life, and help to think more positively about the environment. For example at Arcada University of Applied sciences, a thesis has been written about immigration and integration expectations and experience of foreign student and others (Najariyan 2010.)

At Haaga-Helia University of applied sciences, a multicultural environment is promoted this motivates students and staff alike to be productive. Fortunately, the school provides students and staff with education and training that supports the development of intercultural competencies.

Objectives

This study is designed towards strengthening a oneness spirit among student of HAAGA-HELIA University of applied sciences. This will be achieved by revealing the theories of wellness dimensions, social multidimensional model and social & emotional learning competencies. All theories proposed can help international student integrate and contribute better to the HH & Finnish community at large.

On completion of this study

- The author intends to point out the importance of peer support as a tool for better social relationship among students of HH.
- To encourage international students to feel free discussing with University counsellors.
- To reveal the importance of participating in social activities in HH, how it helps to integrate better helps to fight depression and how it helps student complete their chosen degree programmes.

1.1 Research questions

Personal, emotional, social and academic problems that occur in a student's life can affect most students in the areas of peer acceptance, social activities and can slow integration. Students faced with these challenges need help and counseling. Most students do not use the services even when offered by the school.

The research questions for this study are

1. What is the connection between academic performance, peer & social support and social activities of international students?
2. How can peer awareness & support be strengthened among local and international students in HAAGA-HELIA?
3. What are the factors preventing international students from participating in social activities?
4. What are the common problems international students face upon arriving in Finland?

2 Theoretical framework

In this chapter I will discuss Finland & international students, the six - dimension model of wellness, social wellbeing multidimensional model, academic success social and emotional learning, lack of well being and its effect, depression & its effect on students, social support and international students, sport & integration process for international students, peer support and problems preventing integration.

2.1 Finland and international students

Finland is a leader in information technology, the practice of gender equality and low levels of corruption, this makes it an enjoyable country. It also has an advanced educational system and generally has a high standard of living and quality of life.

Universities in Finland promote learning and have the most inclusive university network in Europe, which many international students benefit from (CIMO 2011.)

The numbers of international students increase, these international students come from different home countries, and they come to study courses for example international, business, information technology, nursing, chemistry and engineering. Finland joined Erasmus student network in 1993. In 2008 there were approximately 6,200 international degree students and approximately 5,350 international exchange students studying at Finnish universities as of 2009 over 14,000 international students are studying in Finland (CIMO 2011).

Studying abroad for students can be likened to immigration, in most cases you need to adapt to a completely new life style, weather, language, culture and learn many other things a new comer must know. Finland provides locals and foreigners free education and ease on their financial pressures as soon as they are accepted in the Universities. Besides this, teachers are willing to take an extra step listening to the student's needs and problems in a personal way that can help them solve some of their issues. This specifically applies to those who cannot manage on their own (CIMO 2006.)

2.2 Wellness

Researchers have failed to agree on a definition on the dimensional structure of wellness. The modern wellness movement by Halbert Dunn, defined wellness in his journal in 1959 as two terms well-being and fitness to generate the new concept of wellness. According to Dunn, wellness is an exceptional state of health comprising an overall sense of wellbeing, which sees Man as comprising of body, spirit, and mind and being reliant on his environment.

Furthermore, Dunn states: “Wellness is an integrated technique of functioning, which is concerned with using the best capable potential of an individual. It necessitates that the individual maintain balance and purposeful direction within the environment where he is active”. (Dunn 1961).

In 1976 Dr Bill Hettler a physician and father of wellness defined wellness as a lively process through which common people become aware and make choices about a more successful existence. Dr Bill Hettler developed the wellness dimension model which was embraced by the national wellness institute.



Figure 1. Six dimensions model of wellness (Hettler 1976)

Physical wellness

This can be referred to as the willingness to pursue an active lifestyle. The physical self includes exercise and nutrition (Myers & Sweeney 2005).

For students a positive relationship between nutrition and academics has been identified by different researchers in the past. Physical wellness can be achieved by exercising daily for at least 30 minutes, recognizing early signs of illness, and sleeping well. According to Dr Bill Hettler (1961), physical wellness is based on these principles:

- “It is better to eat foods and take beverages that enhance good health rather than those which impair it;”
- “It is best to be physically fit than out of shape”.

Spiritual wellness

This involves connecting with your deeper self and the spirituality dimension of your life developing faith could be something larger than one’s self. One can find meaning and purpose by developing and identifying values and belief in one’s life, practice acceptance of self, and detachment from outcomes, by appreciating the depth and beauty of life. Dr Bill Hettlers (1961) spiritual wellness follows these two principles:

- “It is best to reflect on the meaning of life for ourselves and to be tolerant of the beliefs of others than to close our minds and become intolerant”.
- “It is better to live in each day in a way that is consistent with our values and beliefs than to do otherwise and feel untrue to ourselves”.

Occupational Wellness

This involves preparing for work in which you will find personal satisfaction and enrichment. To achieve this kind of wellness one needs to learn new skills, develop personal missions and goals, identify strengths in work or hobbies that contribute to your enjoyment and need of meaning.

Dr Bill Hettlers (1961) definition of occupational wellness is based on two principles:

- “It is best to choose a career consistent with our personal values, interest, and beliefs than to select one that is unrewarding to us.”
- “It is better to develop manageable skills through structured opportunities than to remain inactive”.

Emotional wellness

This can be described as maintaining good mental health, an optimistic attitude, and high sense of worth. To achieve emotional wellness one needs to participate in personal growth activities, self-esteem workshops, surround one's self with a good support group and continuous practice of positive thinking. Dr Bill Hettlers emotional wellness is based on two principles:

- “It is best to be aware of and accept your feelings rather than to deny them”
- “It is best to be optimistic in approach to life than pessimistic”

Intellectual wellness:

This requires curiosity and a strong desire to learn, solving problems, thinking independently, creatively and critically. The advantage is that as individuals we begin to recognize our creative abilities and expand our knowledge and skills at the same time.

According to Dr Bill Hettler (1961), Intellectual wellness follows two principles, which are:

- “It is best to challenge your mind with creative and intellectual pursuit than to become unproductive”.
- “It is better to identify coming problems and choose appropriate solutions Based on available information than to wait, and contend with major concerns later.”

Social wellness

Social wellness is about the degree, content of interactions with others, the community, and nature. It also involves the extent of work towards supporting the community and environment actions, such as volunteer work (Hettler 1980.)

Included in the definition of social wellness is getting along with others and being comfortable and willing to express one’s feelings, opinions and wants helpful relationships including sexual relations and interaction with the environment and contribution to one’s community (Renger et al 2000.)

Social wellness also includes the extent to which one gives support and how one receives support and the respect of others. In summary, social wellness moves toward towards balancing and integration of the interaction between nature, the society, and individual. Finally, J.A. Durlak (2008) on positive impact of social and emotional learning outlined social wellness competencies as peer acceptance, altruism attachments bonds with others and assertiveness and conflict resolution. Meanwhile problem areas in social wellness included peer rejection, social isolation, social anxiety, violence and delinquency.

According to Dr Bill Hettlers (1961), social wellness dimension is based on two principles:

- “It is best to contribute to the common welfare of our community than to think only of ourselves”
- “It is best to live in harmony with others and our environment than to live in conflict with them”.

The holistic model of the wellness dimension explains

- “The advantage of regular physical activity, strength, healthy eating habits personal responsibility and self –care”.
- “Willpower as a sense of direction, self –control and self esteem”.
- “Positive mental activities and sharing with others”.
- “The enrichment of life using work, connection between playing and living”
- “Developing beliefs and values in one’s life”.
- “The extent of contribution to immediate community and environment and effective way of building a better social network”.

2.3 Effect of depression and lack of wellbeing on students

Depression is an illness that affects people physically, emotionally, mentally and socially. Depression affects student by making them loose focus. The use of self-talk can enable them overcome negative thoughts (Lin & Betz 2009). Depression is regularly linked to downward spirals in behavior and quality of academic performance. Depression can be disturbing, and each person is different. Common problems people experience are thoughts, concentrating, making decisions and being unusually forgetful. It can affect feelings, causing fatigue or loss of energy, decline in personal hygiene, reduced pleasure from activities, low self worth and withdrawal from friends and family

Depressed youth are more likely to show disorders, to manifest academic problems and ultimately to drop out of school (Hoeksema et al.1992).

Alexander et al. (1994) stated that depression as a difficulty could occur or happen at any point in time and it may occur from different events and it makes one feel down and most people with depression react to it in different ways. Emotional Stability is the manner in which a human being manages challenges, maintains cool and copes with stress. Anxious individuals for instance, experience a high level of psychological distress. School dropouts and delinquent behaviors of students are predictable from the performance and academic achievement of the students. (Ekstrom, et al1986).

This probably could explain why some international students at HH drop out in the first year. The number of social relationships within higher education may have an ef-

fect on how well a student adjusts to the surroundings. Students with amplified levels of stress or decreased outlets for coping with a changing environment may have more difficulty in the classroom (Hazler & Hermon 1999.)

A good feeling of happiness and contentment can be described as psychological well-being. Students who do not have the ability to manage their emotions are more likely to have lower scores associated with psychological well-being (Sinclair & Myers 2004.) This holds true for the ability of individuals to be comfortable with their self, cultural, and spiritual identity as well. Students who have concerns in these areas have greater than before, stressors and therefore may not be able to center on other areas such as academic performance (Broido & Evans 1999.)

International students may feel isolated, or have fewer opportunities to discuss personal and academic problems that they have. Research has shown that factors, including, physical fitness, social adaptation and emotional stability can contribute to whether an individual continues past the first year of college (Astin et al. 1993.)

2.4 Social and emotional learning & wellness in academics

Social and emotional learning is the process by which children and adults acquire the knowledge, attitudes and skills to recognize and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, demonstrate caring and concern for others establish and maintain positive relationships, make responsible decisions and handle interpersonal situations effectively. (Payton et al. 2008)

(Dubois 1995) found that emotional variables exerted a strong influence on how well students adjusted to their first year of college. As a result, skills and attributes can help students feel motivated to succeed, to believe in their success, to communicate well with teachers, to set academic goals, to organize themselves to achieve goals and to overcome obstacles.

(Szulecka, Springett, & Pauw 1987) have suggested that the major causes of attrition in first year college students are emotional rather than academic factors. (Leafgran 1989) suggested that students who are emotionally and socially healthy have a greater chance to succeed in

college. The need to address the social –emotional challenges that interfere with student’s academic performance in school is important issues such as alienation, low commitment, isolation and dropping out will lead to failure on the part of student’s desired goal.

(Elias, Arnold & Hussey 2002.)

The key elements of social and emotional learning are:

In the school learning situation social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process for integrating thinking, feeling and behavior to achieve important social task, meet personal and social needs and develop the skills to become a productive, contributing member of society.

Self-awareness in social and emotional learning discusses the need for students to identify and recognize their emotions, accurate self-perception, recognize their individual strength, needs, values and spirituality.

Social awareness in social and emotional learning preaches the importance of having empathy on others appreciating diversity and respect for others.

Responsible decision making in social and emotional learning discusses the need for students to be able to detect crisis and the importance of been able to analyze different situations, crisis solving, evaluation, reflection, accepting personal, moral and ethical responsibilities.

Self –management in social and emotional learning discusses the need for students to be able to control their urge, manage stress, self-motivation and discipline, goal setting and acquiring organizational skills.

Relationship management in social and emotional learning discusses the need for student to be able to communicate, participate in communal activities, building relationships, working co-operatively, negotiations, refusal & conflict management and help seeking and providing. (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2005; Elias, Zins, Weiss-berg, Frey, Greenberg, Haynes, Kessler, Schwab-Stone, & Shriver, 1997; Zins & Elias, 2006). See figures two in the attachment.

2.5 Social wellbeing Multidimensional model

Keyes (1998) introduced the multidimensional model of social well-being. It discusses five dimensions that indicate whether and to what extent individuals are functioning well in their social world.

A. Social integration: an individual's evaluation of the quality of own relation with society. Social integration is measured how often one felt the feeling of belonging like a social group, school and larger community.

B. Social contribution the feeling of being an important member of the society, with something to offer. Social contribution is measured as how frequent you feel that you had something important to contribute to society.

C. Social acceptance trusting others, and having favorable opinions about human nature. It was measured as how often did you feel that people are good.

D. Social involvement: your kind of behavior.

E. Social perception: what you think of the society around you.

Social wellbeing is a sense of involvement with other people and with our communities. Wellbeing is not only about being happy, but also about being engaged with life and other people (Keyes 1998)

2.6 Social support and international students

Informal networks and social support plays vital role in the adjustment and acculturation of immigrants. Immigrants might find it difficult to access institutionalized formal support due to unawareness of its existence or the complex nature of getting it. (Shen & Takeuchi 2001.)

Forman (1988) believes that social support and educational placement is a predictor of scholastic competence, conduct, athletic competition, physical appearance, general self worth and self-esteem. A positive relationship between academic performance, educational focus, social skills, self-concept and social support can always be found in students. (Malecki & Elliot 1999.)

If student with learning problems sought support, they had higher scores on self worth. The availability of social support to a high degree predicts the individual's ability in handling stress. Research shows that social support from others provides a buffer that moderates the effects of psychosocial stressors (Dalton et al., 2001). Naturally knowing that others value you is an important psychological factor that helps to forget the bad areas of life and gives more room to positive thoughts about surrounding environment. Social support is also an essential factor in preventing negative symptoms such as depression and anxiety from developing with school community, teachers and other students.

2.7 Peer support

Relating with a peer group may be the largest factor contributing to a student's academic success (Astin, 1993). Supportive peer relationships, sharing of knowledge, experience and role model enhances healthy coping skills. A peer support system can have a particularly positive impact on a group of young people where they are sources of reference for one another (Louw, Van Ede 1998).

Peer support can be a tool for managing emotional and behavioral problems before they become severe. In this way, a culture can be created in which young people feel free to ask for help if they need it and a more caring climate can be established in the schools (Tanaka & Reid, 1997). Through the support of their peers, young people can be empowered to take ownership of their own well-being and can initiate the solving of some of the problems they experience. A peer group has a purpose and is important as no other means of support can replace it. Classmates and friends can boost ones popularity, status, prestige, and acceptance. King et al. (1994) argued that evaluations in an academic programme are influenced by characteristic modes of behavior such as,

talkativeness, dominance, perseverance and conscientiousness. Individual differences in specific personality traits can be related to scholastic success.

2.8 Sports and problems preventing integration

Sport has been described in Finland as one of the most useful ways of improving intercultural action. Participating in sports activities has been believed to improve immigrant's ability to speak Finnish and acquaint themselves with Finns and wider immigrant social networks. (Pohjanpää, 2003, 130- 133). The importance of sport for immigrants has been approved in many ways. It is now a general knowledge that sport can improve skills on rules, values, language and norms, which are useful outside of sport fields. To encourage sporting activities HAAGA-HELIA organizes different sport activities and also grants study credits for sports courses. All courses with a code starting with the letters PHY are sports courses.

Many international student experience difficulties on arrival in a foreign country and they must adjust quickly to the environment in order for them to function with the society. Language difficulty in listening, talking, reading, writing and understanding are mostly common and the most urgent in the academic and social life of international students. (Zhang & Mi 2010.) International students seem to experience new culture, new group and perhaps new language. All these can result to a cultural shock for international student. Culture is an integral part of every society and every society has diverse culture, where people behave differently and converse in different languages, beliefs; tradition and have different perceptions (Cameron & kirkman 2010.)

2.9 Summary of theoretical framework

The theoretical framework explains the importance of the six-dimension model of wellness in order to avoid depression in international students. Social and emotional learning linked to academics is a tool for student to develop key competencies of social awareness, responsible decision-making, self-management and relationship management in schools and it is centered on self.

These helps international student to be aware of the need and importance of the well-being services, peer support and social activities in HAAGA-HELIA. The multidimensional model of social wellbeing explains through its five dimensions the extent to which individuals can function well in their social world. These dimensions are social integration, social acceptance, social contribution giving and receiving peer support in the University and Finnish society. Social involvement is about how an international student evaluates his or her behavior in the University and among peers. Lastly, social perception is about how international student perceive the Finnish society.

I believe these feelings will influence and decide the retention, dropping out and integration of an international student. It also forms the basis of the research objectives, questions, interviews and findings of this study.

Figure 3 illustrates my proposed model for international students of HAAGA-HELIA University of applied sciences.



Figure 3 .My proposed model for international students.

3 Methodology

The methodology chapter discusses the qualitative methods used in this study, interview questions, data collection & analysis procedures, selection of respondents and ethical procedures

Research method

This study is a qualitative research interview. I used the structured interview and structured questions, and interview questions were open-ended. When designing the questions, I avoided leading questions, probed issues in depth and sought for insight into problems of the international students and wellbeing services of HAAGA-HELIA. The research work is continuous and allows for further improvement in the future. There is a large range of methods common in qualitative measurement. Discussed below are familiar methods.

The interview method allows individuals to disclose thoughts and feelings, which are clearly private, valuable and sensitive. An interview as a research method originates from the craving to know more about the people around us and to better know how the people around us view important issues. The interview method is most efficient when the aspiration of the research is to gain insight about people around. (Clough & Nutbrown 2007).

Types of interviews

A structured interview is when the interviewer has a series of questions written down on a piece of paper, and the process involves asking those questions verbally and then noting the answers given. Structured interview method relies on the inter-personal skills of the interviewer, the ability to establish relationship, rapport, flexibility and confidentiality. (Cohen et al. 2007).

Semi-structured interviews are a bit more relaxed than structured interviews. While researchers using this type are still expected to cover every question in the protocol, they have some twist space to discover participant responses by asking for explanation or supplementary information. Interviewers also have the liberty to be more friendly

and sociable. An unstructured interview is where there may be a script to get the process started, but once the interview gets going the interviewer will start to follow her own points of interest and stop following any script.

Reason for structured interview

As the interviewer, I wanted the interview sessions with the respondent to have a mix of both freedom and protocol by following the topics and themes systematically. The structured interview was based on a pre-prepared list of questions. The aim of interview was to get an insight on the management and experience of how peer support, social support, social activities and integration are related to wellness among international students from the interviewee. I had the opportunity as the interviewer to probe and follow up on questions asked. The interview sessions were more personal compared to just sending list of questions to the respondents.

Data Collection Procedures

Questionnaire design

The questions were open –ended, neutral, sensitive and understandable. The interview questions were designed with the assistance and approval of my supervisor. The questionnaire can be found in the appendix. The questions were designed to give answers to the research questions of this study which are

1. What is the connection between academic performance, peer support, social skills, and social support of international students?
2. How can peer awareness & support be strengthened among local and international students in HAAGA-HELIA?
3. What are the factors affecting international students from participating in social activities?
4. What are the common problems international students face upon arriving in Finland?

Theme of Social support

The purpose for the social support theme was to make respondent describe the social support system already available in HH. Secondly, to ascertain the level of awareness of the social support provided amongst international student of HH. Thirdly, to open up international student to approach members of wellbeing services of HH for counseling. Fourthly, to find out from respondent what they think about the structure HH has in place for learning disabilities and to get information about reaction, observation of international students who had learning problems after getting help. Finally to find out the suspected factors affecting international students from communicating problems while studying at HH. This will answer the first and fourth research question of this study.

Theme of Social activities

The opinions and observation of the interviewed about student who distanced themselves from social activities VS those student who participate fully, the factors preventing international students from participating in school activities needed to be established to showcase how social activities can lead to a better integration for international students. This will help answer the research question number three.

Theme of Peer support

The purpose of peer support in the interview was to expand the understanding on how participating in social activities can affect peer support a student might get from other students. Another purpose is to find out possible causes of peer rejection among international students in HAAGA-HELIA and the amount of peer support international students get from other students to solve problems they encounter at HH. Finally, the question is how to increase awareness among HH students on peer support. This will answer the second research question of this study.

Theme of Integration

The purpose was to get the opinion of the respondents on which social activities they think help students integrate better for now, their opinion about the common problems they think students face based on their experience and observation with interna-

tional students. Finally to give advice to foreign students having difficulty with integrating. This will cover the research questions number three and five of this study.

Selection of respondents

The people interviewed are:

- Katri Salmi .International co-coordinator of HAAGA-HELIA campus. The interview was held in Haaga campus in her office on Friday 31 May 2013.
- Kaisa Iso-Herttua, University chaplain (Master of theology). The interview was held in the Pasila campus in her office on Monday 3rd June 2013.
- Petri Meronen, Psychologist. The interview was held in Vallila campus in his office on Monday 27th of May 2013.
- Harry Lähdekorpi, specialist for International affairs of HAAGA-HELIA. The interview was held in Pasila campus on Monday 27th of May 2013.

Katri Salmi is the international coordinator and contact person for both incoming exchange students and other international /local students in HAAGA –HELIA when they go abroad. Harri Lähdekorpi runs the international division of the student union with the HELGA board representative of international affairs.

The international division consists of three action groups run by HAAGA –HELIA students: ESN-HELGA, International degree students & AIESEC. Harri also prepares the international exchange student tutoring services in cooperation with the international services of HAAGA-HELIA. Kaisa Iso-Herttua the University chaplain doubles as a spiritual counselor and a teacher for life management courses. Petri Meronen the University psychologist counsels students on social, personal and emotional problems. All the respondents have direct contact with international students and they try to solve problems international students might encounter.

Interviewer preparation and process

The personal interaction between researchers and participants is crucial in data gathering by keeping in mind the research focus and being clear about the role of researchers.

The researcher's perception of ground situations are determined by personality and the nature of the interaction (Punch 1994).

Interviewer role is always multifaceted and versatile. My role as the interviewer included the following tasks. Scheduling interviews, locating the respondent in their different campuses arranging meeting times, clarifying the confusing issues in the questionnaire during interview and observing the quality of responses.

The interview began with a brief introduction, career profile and the role each respondent plays in the life of an international student. The reason is to prove to the reader that the respondent is an authority and relevant source to the study. The longest interview was with Kaisa Iso-Herttua the school chaplain it lasted for about 2.5 hours from 10.30 until about 1pm. I presented the questions orally and wrote down the answers in my own form while the interviewed person also filled theirs simultaneously.

3.1 Data analysis procedures

Coding is an interpretive method that both organizes the data and provides resources to initiate the interpretations of it into firm quantitative methods. Coding requires the analyst to read the data and distinguish segments inside it. (Creswell, J. W. (2003).

The content analysis style of coding was used to arrive at the findings with a range of text gotten from the interview questions. This method was chosen because it helps to summarize communication and social interaction better. It also provides meaning to difficult human thoughts and verbal communication. Qualitatively, content analysis can engage any kind of analysis where communication content dialogue, printed text, interviews, descriptions is categorized and confidential. (Carley 1990).

Each segment was labeled with subtitles as the questionnaires were divided into four themes social support, social activity, peer support and integration. In the findings of this study, there is a summary of the response given to all questions under each particular theme. The words in the subtitle of the findings represent the similarity in given answers of all respondent concerning a particular question. In analyzing and coding the

data no information was regarded as irrelevant as I read the data and distinguished the segments inside it.

I also used the wellness dimension, social and emotional learning key competences, social & psychological multidimensional models proposed in the theoretical framework to analyze data in comparison to the findings of this study. The data is stable and can be re-coded by another author in future. Not all the questions could be answered by all respondents, as some respondents were in a better position to answer some questions than others based on their position and expertise could.

3.2 Ethical issues

The reason of qualitative studies is to describe an observable fact from the participants' points of view through interviews and observations. The intention of the researcher in this study was to listen to respondents. Approval of statement made by respondent implies that I identified that respondent are professionals who will share information professionally. An unbiased research relationship will encourage revelation as well as attentiveness of possible ethical issues. (Kvale 1996).

One of the crucial and distinctive features of ethics standard in this study is about the principle of avoiding exploitation and abuse of respondent. As the researcher I understand and applied the principle of justice in this study. I made this possible by requesting permission from the respondents to use their contributions and statement in the study. All respondents had knowledge of the study prior to the interview time. They voluntarily consented to the interview dates and place. The questionnaires were sent to the respondents via email and they could terminate interview times if they felt the need not to participate in the study as a respondent.

4 Findings and data analysis

The questions in the interview were not direct questions but open-ended questions, and the responses to each question were grouped together to find commonalities. Each respondent focused on their own area of expertise and none of the respondents answered all the questions.

The different findings of these studies answer efficiently the research questions. The five research questions were to investigate the issues of awareness, social activities that lead to better integration, strengthening peer support, common challenges and suspected factors attributed to international students distancing themselves from the well-being services of HAAGA-HELIA University of applied sciences.

All the themes and research questions used opened up some other issues, which was very helpful to the research itself. The findings of this study are based on recommendations and thoughts of different persons interviewed and scholars. The findings are centered on academic, personal and social problems of an international student.

4.1 Current social support in HAAGA-HELIA

It seems that the current social support structure of HH is adequate and designed to help international student through difficult times. It offers students numerous services when approached at the right time in areas of academic, psychological and spiritual counseling. HH organizes social activities, hobbies, and peer support programmes to support students. The HH wellbeing service consists of qualified professionals.

The well being services in HH today offers international and local student support, activities, courses and professional counseling to assist students who have personal, academic and social problems. Each degree programme has its own academic advisor or Student counselor who is familiar with the curriculum and requirements of the programme. The academic advisor or student counselor assists students with general study

guidance, personal study plans, and credits from earlier studies, private advice and job placement.

Courses supporting student wellbeing involve Life management Pasila, Presentation skills and coping with stress Malmi and Vallila, Stress management Vallila, and all the language courses available in HH University of applied sciences.

International students can turn to the student psychologist on any matter. These can, for example, involve problems in studies, time management, coping, personal relationships, depression, pressure in social situations, fear of exams or any other matter of concern. The discussions are confidential and free of charge. About five meetings can be arranged for per student.

The University chaplain has many responsibilities. In the interview, she states that she talks on issues of life crisis and life management or personal issues concerning anything. International students can discuss personal issues and ask advice about any important decision about to be made. In matters big and small, it is good to know there is always someone to talk to. You can decide what to talk about, and this does not have to involve spiritual affairs. The chaplain respect everyone's rights, convictions and religious beliefs.

International students can discuss with confidentiality all matters relating to health, living habits and your personal situation with HAAGA-HELIA's nurses. An appointment with a nurse is free of charge. You also have the opportunity to have a personal health interview with her during the first year of your studies. Students can also contact the nurse during the rest of their studies as well.

City of Helsinki health questionnaire on the HAAGA-HELIA website

The form will help International students and professionals to evaluate both new and old student's well-being while studying in HH. The form serves as an assessment tool, it is very helpful for international students, and the answers are handled confidentially. The purpose of the questionnaire is to inquire about student's studies and other areas of their lives. Questions of academic, mental, physical and social relationship, exercise,

alcohol habits, personal happiness, how time is spent outside studies, work, family, relationship and friends are discussed. The health form incorporates factors contributing to the six dimensions of wellness, some elements of the social and emotional learning competencies (SEL), and social wellbeing multidimensional model discussed in the theoretical part of this thesis. Currently HH encourages social activity and peer support by awarding students a maximum of 12 credits for participating in social activities. The credit will be titled organizational activities. The city of Helsinki health questionnaire can be found in the attachment Figure 4.

Social support

The second interview question under social support is about the awareness of the social support provided at HH. Over the years, the orientation programme for new students introduces students to the services of HH, social support structure and different social activities.

Katri Salmi recommends that the orientation programs might not be enough to serve as a reminder for the students. In other words she recommends that a continuous orientation program me at the beginning of every academic year should be organized for old and new students somehow.

The third question was about international students approaching respondents for counseling about learning disabilities. Katri noted that as of the time of interview, the service published on the University web –page for learning disabilities was available only for only Finnish students and there was no information for international students. The fourth question could not be answered because there was no contact person for international student on learning disabilities as of this time and all other respondent interviewed said international student do not discuss on the issues of learning disabilities with them. This was later changed.

HH support for international students with learning disabilities

As of the time of this interview, we recognized that there was no information or contact for international students on learning disabilities on how they could get help .The

only contact available was meant for Finnish students. Months later, it was rectified and now international student can contact special needs teachers for learning disabilities. Any students who suspect an unidentified learning difficulty are also recommended to set an appointment with one of the special needs teachers.

Special needs teachers available for international students:

Heini Liesvirta –Pasila, Vallila, Malmi heini.liesvirta@haaga-helia.fi tel. 040 48 87 105

Heikki Ursin: Haaga, Porvoo, Vierumäki heikki.ursin@haaga-helia.fi tel. 050 52 50 415

4.2 Academic performance, peer support and social support of international students

This question helps to answer the first research question. All four respondents believed that peer and social support systems could lead to better academic performance.

Harri and Katri came up with the strongest point. They both agreed that these themes are connected, Harri explains further that students life can be looked at as an entity that consist of not only time spent in classrooms, but also outside the campus as well and lectures only actually represent a mere fraction of everything that is essential for a student to succeed in his studies. Harri states that tutoring is an excellent form of helping a fellow student especially in the beginning of one's studies. Tutoring provides a crucial tool for a student to overcome culture shock and start to create their own social network. Katri believes they are all connected because teachers evaluate students based on their academic strength, participation and attendance in class at HAAGA-HELIA University of applied sciences. Lectures only represent a sheer fraction of the lot that is necessary for students to succeed while studying in HAAGA-HELIA University of applied sciences.

HAAGA-HELIA currently supports participation in peer support and social activities by allocating 12 credits to motivate students academically.

Chairperson of the Representative Council

Head 3 credits

Helga Student Union Chairperson and Board member

Head 7 credits

Board member 5 credits

Student Association Chairpersons and Board members

Head 6 credits

Board member 3 credits

Tutoring

Peer tutoring 3 credits

Sports tutoring 1-5 credits

Callidus tutoring 3 credits

International tutoring 3 credits

Degree programme tutoring 5 credits. (Haaga-helia.fi)

4.3 Social activities HH

The first question under this theme is centered on current social activities and how it helps to widen student's social network. Two respondent out of the four interviewed answered this question.

Katri Salmi of the student affairs points out that it would be nice to develop a unique activity that will unite students of both the Finnish degree programmes and international degree programme which helps to build a spirit of oneness among the students of HH. Katri noted that students of degree programmes conducted in Finnish are still much separated from English degree programmes. She states that it would be nice to see a sporting or social activity that binds the both degree programmes together.

While Harri states that HELGA has a regular fixed hour at the school gymnastic hall, he claims that both Finnish students and foreign students use those fixed hours to play various team sport. Kaisa the University chaplain opposed Harris point of view. She noted that because of the quiet and introverted nature of Finns, It might be difficult to just bond easily over a sport training session. The University chaplain Kaisa and the psychologist said they did not know much about the social activities how successful it has been with international students.

The second question is about factors preventing international students from participating in school activities the most. This helps to answer the research question of number three.

Petri Meronen the University psychologist stated that language barrier, cultural differences and personal differences affect international student from participating in school activities the most. Depressed international student do not get involved in most of the social activity or their group might reject them because they are not reliable.

Katri mentioned that language barrier, religious background and financial problems could be the major factors that stop student from participating in social activities the most. Harri noted language barrier as the major factor that stops international student from participating in social activities. Kaisa the University chaplain marked language barrier and religious background and adapting to a new weather.

The third question is about opinions and observation of international students who distanced themselves from social activities versus those students who participate was to link participating in social activities to better integration for international students.

All respondents noted that the distant student might not perform as well as the socially active students. The psychologist, chaplain and Harry stated that based on their positions they do not dig into academic performance of the students who comes for counseling usually. Kaisa the University chaplain states that academic performance of student who distanced themselves from social activities will be affected because group work in HH is connected to social skills.

Winter Sports Day, Student Union Election, student trips, Helga massage day, Annual Ball etc. Student Union HELGA is by regulation a part of HAAGA-HELIA. Becoming a member also helps international students to integrate better and become aware of different rights as a student.

Efficient language skills limiting international students from social activities

All respondents marked language barrier as the leading factor limiting most international students from participating in social activities in HAAGA-HELIA provides different Finnish and English courses. International students should enroll and be motivated to learn speaking these two languages well enough to communicate with their peers, since these are the most spoken languages in HH.

Integration, challenges and reasons international students shy away from counseling

The first question for integration inquires about how the social activities in HH as helped the international students integrate better.

All the four interviewed believed social activities and events for example IDS cuisine night, Café lingua, and friend programme have been able to integrate students better among their peers but these events could have more international students participating in future.

The third question is asking advice for international student having difficulty integrating while studying at HH. Harry advises international student to come to the student union and talk about these problems with staff or board members. He states that HELGA mission is to help students with matters that are considered important.

Katri advises student not to stay alone at home to avoid loneliness. Loneliness is a problem for international students. Creating & maintaining good relationships inside and outside the school campuses has great effect.

Kaisa the university chaplain advises students to be more open minded and learn to ask for help. International student should find their interest, continue their hobbies, be active on campus and outside of campus, learn the unique culture & communications skills of Finland and most importantly start communicating.

What are the most common problems faced by international /exchange students in HAAGA-HELIA upon arriving in Finland?

This question helps to answer the research question number four. All four respondents had almost same opinion. Cultural shock and differences were common in their answers. Harri stated that international degree students have problems with housing, employment and cultural problems. Secondly, he stated that the introverted and not too talkative nature could cause anxiety in some foreign students, because they feel excluded. Harri also states that international student might experience stress when getting used to group and project work and how it is done in Finland. Coupled with the teaching method and the non-conventional role of a facilitator or mentor that is been used in Finland rather than the conventional role of a lecturer in other countries.

Petri the University psychologist believes the major problems faced by international / exchange students upon arriving Finland are the feeling of cultural shock, cultural differences, temperaments and International student's personal ability relating with other cultures.

Katri said the most common problems faced by international /exchange student of HH are, not getting along with flat mates, cultural difference issues, students not happy with price of housing and quality.

The university chaplain Kaisa noted that international students are faced with the challenges of cultural shock and weather upon arriving in Finland.

The HH chaplain clearly states that international students are not so aware of her services, the awareness can be considered low. She states that reasons could be different cultural backgrounds, the way different cultures, and religion view counseling. She noticed that in some cultures most people would go to a psychologist rather than pastors for counseling and vice versa. For example, Finnish students are more likely to use the services of the school nurse more because issues of spirituality are rarely talked about openly and often regarded as private.

Different religious background is also an issue to be considered. International students with different religious backgrounds might believe only Christians can use the services of the chaplain not knowing they can discuss other life issues with her. The University Petri Meronen noted that some students might be afraid of the issue of confidentiality. His reassured international students that all matters are handled in privacy. Harri believes marketing might be responsible for the low awareness of social support among international students and he said it has been worked on.

4.4 Peer support helps cultural shock, stress and helps build social network

The purpose of peer support in the interview was to generate awareness in the mind of the student/reader and strengthen peer support among both local and international students.

Secondly, the aim is to make the reader /student see the importance of participating in social activities, how it affects the peer support a student might get from other students and to ascertain the possible causes of peer rejection amongst international students in HH. This will answer the second research question of this study.

All respondents answered agreed international students participating in social activities at HH has a direct effect on peer support they get from other students.

The second question is about main causes for peer rejection amongst international students in HH University of applied sciences.

Harri believes the answers to this are learning disabilities, cultural background and reduced participation in social activities. He said that if an international student feels rejected it is a sum of many factors. Katri states that for exchange students/international students the reasons for peer rejection are clear language issues, and cultural differences. Kaisa the University chaplain stated that at the introductory level, personality, insecurity and suspicious feelings could cause peer rejection amongst students.

The third question has to do with how more awareness on peer support can be improved amongst students. This answers the second research question. Harri answered that HH student's needs to have a stronger HH spirit of same institution. We should put emphasis more on creating a unique HH spirit among students and member of staff. The university chaplain Kaisa states that during orientation programmes peer tutoring and support can be given more emphasis.

The respondents were asked if they thought international students in HH get enough peer support from other student to solve some problems they encounter.

Harri believes that not all problems can be solved by peer support. Professionals from various fields are required too. Harri believes a student can relieve stress by offering his or her mate peer support, tutoring which also provides the opportunity for students to overcome cultural shock and get to start one's social network. Kaisa the University chaplain states that peer support depends on the individual network of each student. Kaisa also states for international students it is very important to create a very good first impression from the initial beginning, since good reputation and positive attitude are all important elements in avoiding peer rejection. Katri Salmi said that positive attitude from student at the very beginning of every session will help students to support their peers better at HH although international students getting support from their peers could depend on individual social network. Being a Callidus, sport, exchange and peer tutors to international student helps to build social network, overcome cultural shock and prevent loneliness. Students can relieve stress by offering his or her mate peer support.

4.5 Summary of findings

Social support in HH:

- It consists of academic, psychological, spiritual counseling.
- Courses supporting student wellbeing: Life management, presentation skills and coping with stress, Stress management and all the language courses available in HH University of applied sciences.
- Helsinki city questionnaire contains element of psychological & social dimensions.
- Continuous orientation programme at the beginning of every academic year for both old and new students
- As of the time of interviews there was no information for counseling for learning disabilities in English for international students but was later rectified.

Academic performance, peer support & social support (research question 1)

All respondent believe the three are connected since teachers evaluate students based on academic strength, participation and attendance.

HH supports participation in peer support & social activities by allocating 12 credits to motivate students.

Social activities

Language barrier was identified as key factor limiting international students from participating in school activities. **(research question 3)**

- Socially active students have been noted to exhibit self worth and confidence in a group.
- HAAGA-HELIA should look into developing the already existing and cultural, sport activity and also create a study related programme between Finnish degree programme and English degree programme this will unite students of both the Finnish degree programmes and international degree programme better. This will help build a spirit of oneness and improve both local and international student social network while studying and after.

Integration

- Social activities have helped international students to mix or get familiar with each other but more international student should participate in social activities.
- International student having difficulties should not stay at home, use the wellbeing services more, have an open mind, take Finnish & English courses find interest and be active.

Common problems faced by international students upon arrival

(Research question 4)

- Cultural shock common in the answers of all four respondents.
- International degree students have problems with housing and employment
- The introverted and not too talkative nature of Finns can cause anxiety in some foreign students, because they feel excluded.
- International student might experience stress when getting used to group and project work and how it is done in Finland coupled with the teaching method and the non conventional role of a facilitator or mentor that is been used in Finland rather than the conventional role of a lecturer in other countries.

Reasons international students shy away from counseling

- Different cultural back grounds and the way different cultures and religion view counseling.
- Some students might be afraid of the issue of confidentiality.

Peer support helps cultural shock, stress and helps build social network

All respondents answered agreed that international students participating in social activities at HH has a direct effect on peer support they get from other students. HH students need to have a stronger HH spirit of same institution. More emphasis should be directed at creating a unique HH spirit among students and member of staff. A unique study related course mixed with the Finnish and English degree programme student. In addition, positive attitude from student

at the very beginning of every session will help students to support their peers better at HH.

- Being a Callidus, sport, exchange and peer tutors to international student helps to build social network, overcome cultural shock and prevent loneliness. Students can relieve stress by offering his or her mate peer support. Main causes for peer rejection amongst international students in HH University of applied sciences are, learning disabilities, cultural background and reduced participation in social activities.

5 Discussions

Considering that some student might find it hard to cope in an international learning environment due to cultural differences, age differences and learning disabilities, this can result to isolation and separation. The more students isolate themselves from social activities and support groups the more their overall wellness suffers and such student have a high risk of becoming depressed and dropping out. The goal of this study is to assist and re –awaken international students about the importance of their wellness and show them how to achieve a better life while studying in HAAGA- HELIA. The background to this study includes the role social and emotional wellbeing plays in the lives of international students. To achieve emotional wellness one needs to participate in personal growth activities, self-esteem workshops, surround one's self with a good support group and continuous practice of positive thinking.

The four research questions were adequately answered. Malecki and Elliot (1999) found a positive relationship between academic performance, educational focus, social skills, self-concept and social support. The connection between academic performance, peer support and social activities was established in the findings. HAAGA –HELIA supports the active participation by allocating credits for different activities to both international and Finnish students, in total 12 credits. Being a Callidus, sport, exchange and peer tutor can help a student to strengthen his or her social network, overcome cultural shock and prevent loneliness. Students can relieve stress by offering his or her mate peer support.

Peer awareness and support can be strengthened at HAAGA-HELIA considering the importance of developing a strong feeling of same University among international students and Finnish students. International students participating in social activities at HH has a direct effect on peer support they get from other students.

Language barrier by all respondents was identified as key reasons preventing international students from participating in activities in HAAGA-HELIA. Language difficulty in listening, talking, reading, writing and understanding are mostly common and the most urgent in the academic and social life of international students. (Zhang & Mi 2010.)

Studying abroad for students can be likened to immigration, in most cases you need to adapt to a completely new life style, weather, language, culture and learn many other things a new comer must know. Cultural shock was common in the answers of all the four respondents as the main problem international students are faced with upon arriving in Finland. International degree students also have problems with housing and employment. International students might experience stress when getting used to group and project work and how it is done in Finland coupled with the teaching method and the non conventional role of a facilitator or mentor that is been used in Finland rather than the conventional role of a lecturer in other countries. Students with amplified levels of stress or decreased outlets for coping with a changing environment may have more difficulty in the classroom (Hazler & Hermon 1999.)

5.1 Unexpected Findings

Social wellness problems described by J.A Durlak2008 are peer rejection, social isolation, social anxiety, violence and delinquency. These led to possible reasons of social anxiety & peer rejection among international students in HAAGA-HELIA.

Social anxiety

Through the interviews, two of the respondent stated that one of the possible causes of anxiety among international students could be associated to the introverted and not too talkative nature of the Finns. The introverted nature of Finns could make bonding difficult after a team sport or social activity for example.

Peer rejection

The findings of this study discovered the reason for peer rejection as clear language accent, cultural differences, learning disabilities, and reduced participation in social activities. In the beginning when getting to know each other in a class or group nationality, personality, insecurity and suspicious feelings could also cause peer rejection amongst students generally. Having, empathy respect for others and appreciating diversity of different cultures is very key to do developing social awareness and peer acceptance amongst International and local students explained by social and emotional learning.

Shying away from counseling

International students may feel isolated, or have fewer opportunities to discuss personal and academic problems that they have. This led to investigating the reasons most international students shying away from counseling in HAAGA-HELIA. Different cultural backgrounds, having different views about professional counseling and the fear of confidentiality among international student were found to be the major reasons behind abstinence

City of Helsinki health questionnaire

Self-evaluation will make student more mentally prepared and improve the awareness of the need to contribute positively and interact with other students effectively. International student tend to suffer most, this set of student become more isolated from the school community and might drop out eventually. At the beginning of every class, everyone is new to each other this is more severe in an international class with different cultures, age, and sex. Self-awareness proposed by (SEL), consists of identifying and recognizing emotions, Positive assessment of oneself, self-acceptance, sense of continued growth, personal growth, positive relations with others, the competence to administer effectively one's life and surrounding world. It also contains questions about recognizing and identifying emotions. The purpose of the questionnaire is to inquire about studies and other areas of students' lives. Questions of academic, mental, physical and social relationship, exercise, alcohol habits, personal happiness, how time is

spent outside studies, work, family, relationship, and friends are asked. The questionnaire can be found in the Attachment 5.

5.2 Interviews, findings and implementation.

During the interview session with Petri Meronen the University psychologist, we agreed and discovered the need for a mental health assessment tool to help student and authorities evaluate student's psychological wellbeing it was later implemented and can be found in My Net under the wellbeing services. At some stage in the interview with Katri Salmi the international coordinator of HAAGA-HELIA campus, It was discovered that there was no information on the web page for special need teachers especially for international students with learning disabilities. This was later rectified and now all students can easily find contact persons in charge and book an appointment. Also during the interview with Kaisa the university chaplain we agreed on the need to group the existing wellbeing courses on the web page in other to raise awareness for more student to enroll for these courses to aid there emotional wellness.

6 Conclusion & recommendation

As the author of this study, I realized the importance of a thorough understanding of self and relating with people around. Being active and social around your community is a personal and ethical responsibility. The areas that may have an important influence on undergraduate student retention are academic, social, personal, emotional adjustment and institutional commitments.

The solution to isolation, separation and depression while studying is socializing more, supporting others and utilizing the social support system in place at HAAGA-HELIA University of applied sciences. Healthy wellness lifestyle amongst students should have habits such as adequate sleep and rest, exercise, participation in activities, good nutrition, productivity, social contact, and supportive relationship. The feeling of being accepted socially, trusting others, and having favorable opinions about human nature is key to appreciating the social support in HH. It is important that international students feel the people around them mean well for them.

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6.1 Implications

This study is focused on promoting wellness using social- emotional learning and social multidimensional model of wellbeing as a tool to integration, preventing depression and dropping out with the support of the wellbeing services amongst international students.

International students should have better awareness of self, social awareness, responsible decision making, self management and relationship management skills. All this will lead to a better feeling of social acceptance, social perception, social integration & contribution. Finally academic success can be linked to social and emotional wellness.

Offering and receiving support, informal & formal contact with other students and the student wellbeing services of HH have been found to play a significant role in international student completing their studies. International student who over estimate their ability to adjust to support structures of HH may become more vulnerable to dropping out.

6.2 What should International students do?

Social support:

- International student should learn to have an open mind trust discussing personal, social and academic problems with professionals of the wellbeing service of HH
- Student should fill the Helsinki city health questionnaire. This will make student more mentally prepared and improve the awareness of the need to contribute positively & interact with other students and staff of the University.
- Spiritual wellness plays a vital role in the life of a student, already some of the HH campuses provide students with silent / meditation rooms. Students should use the silent rooms in every campus to ease stress.
- International students should give feedback to all HH wellbeing services after getting help. Feedback is very important for measuring what can be improved in the future.

Social activities

- International students should participate in one social activity with peers to expand their social network.

Peer support

- International students should participate more in peer support programmes of HH as it helps to overcome cultural shock and stress. Volunteering to help other students will make other student helping you easier.

Better integration

- For the purpose of better integration and networking, international students should take both Finnish and English courses in spare time. Understanding the act of conflict resolution in groups, active participation in group work will help international students to build and manage relationships. While studying in HH international student should avoid staying alone at home for too long to avoid loneliness. International student should find their interest, continue their hobbies, be active on campus and outside of campus, learn the unique culture & communications skills of Finland and most importantly start communicating.

6.3 What should HAAGA-HELIA do?

For future purpose, some developments were done to improve the wellbeing services before this thesis was published. Fortunately, the improvements made matched some of the initial questions and findings of the study. The newly added information before the completion of this study on HH My Net wellbeing services are city of Helsinki Health Centre Student Questionnaire form in English, contact persons for English speaking students on learning disabilities in different campuses, and courses supporting student wellbeing.

Social support HAAGA-HELIA

- Continuous orientation programme at the beginning of every academic year for old and new students.

- Mental health campaigns could be introduced to help students cope with depression in HAAGA-HELIA. During orientation days, more awareness should be created for students by the school authorities to fill out the health questionnaire on the HH web page and the importance of enrolling on life management courses.
- HH should provide questionnaires to all students who consult the counselors for measuring help rendered.
- HAAGA-HELIA should look into developing the already existing and cultural, sport activity and also create a study related programme between Finnish degree programme and English degree programme this will unite students of both the Finnish degree programmes and English degree programme better. This will help build a spirit of oneness and improve both local and international student social network while studying and after.
- HH should provide questionnaires to students for the purpose of improving on social activities

6.4 Personal evaluation on thoughts and learning process during this study

My experience researching and writing this wellness study improved my holistic view of adult hood and skills needed in managing life issues and people around. The process of the study from the beginning to the end helped my organizational skills and enabled me to set achievable goals.

The strength of this study is based on the relevance of wellness, social and emotional learning for the purpose of integrating in a multicultural community, and completing their studies in the university. All the research questions were answered and research objectives were met. Student not giving feed back or the non availability of information on how students feel after participating in a social activities limited the findings on how social activity helps integrate international students better in HH .

The prepared question worked well for each respondent considering that all respondent have different professional background and experience. The questions were designed in a way that each respondent could relate and express their thoughts on each theme. The questions was divided into themes of peer, social support, social activity and integration produced interesting result and the answers from respondent matched expert opinions and enabled the study to arrive at a reasonable conclusion.

The topic concerns international students majorly. It would be logical to ask for the opinion of students who have dropped out in the past, student who recovered from depression about their observation and how HH well-being service was able to come to their aid. Future research on internationals student s wellness and dropping out should base its findings on student's thoughts and feeling .This study is based on observations and experience of different expert that works with University undergraduates. Finally the research is continuous and allows for further improvement in the future

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Attachment 1

Thesis title

Wellness, social emotional learning & support system for international students at HAAGA-HELIA University of applied sciences

Concept and themes for the thesis interview

The concept of social and emotional wellness and competencies is here limited to these themes social activities, Social and Peer support and integration. The research questions concentrates on measures that have been taken by haaga- helix to improve students wellness focusing on this themes of social /school support including support for learning disabilities, social activities, and peer support and integration amongst students. It includes how international students behave and use these structures to improve their Wellness.

The goal of this study is to assist and re –awaken both international and exchange student about the importance of their wellness and show them how to achieve a better life while studying in HAAGA- HELIA Finland. The aim of interview is to get an insight on the management and experience of how peer support, social support, social activities and integration are related to wellness among international students from the interviewee.

Questions

Organizational department

Career, field/ profession

Person and position

Haaga- helix is an international university of applied sciences with international students.

What role do you play in the life of an international student?

How do you view the relationship between academic performance, peer support and social support of international students?

What are the most common problems faced by international /exchange students Haaga – helix upon arriving in Finland?

Social support

1. How can you describe the social support system in HAAGA-HELIA?

2. To what extent do you think international students are aware of the social support provided at HAAGA –HELIA?

3. How often do International students approach you for advice about any kind of learning Disabilities they have?

4. From your observation do you think the structure HAAGA–HELIA has in place for learning disabilities is effective and utilized by international students?

5. What have been the reaction/ behavior of international students who had learning problems after getting support and help from HAAGA –HELIA

Social activities

1. Has the social/sporting activities in HAAGA-HELIA been linked in any way to improve international/ exchange students ability to widen their social networks?

-
2. Which of these factors do you think affects international students from participating in school activities the most?

- Language barrier
- cultural differences
- Age differences?
- Personal differences?
- Religious background?
- financial problems
- Adapting to a new weather

-
3. From you observation and experience with international student in HAGGA –HELIA what have you noticed about student who distance themselves from social activities in HAAGA –HELIA versus those student who participate fully

Academic performance

Behavior and conduct with others (social relationships)

Physical appearance and fitness

General self worth and self esteem

4. Do you think international student with learning disabilities manage or participate fully in HAAGA-HELIA social activities?

Peer support

1. Do you think international students participating in social activities in HAAGA –HELIA has a direct effect on peer support they get from other students?
-

2. What do you think are the main causes for peer rejection amongst international students in HAAGA- HELIA University of applied sciences? Learning disabilities, cultural back ground, reduced participation in social activities?
-

3. From your experience with international student at HAAGA-HELIA, how can more awareness on peer support are created amongst students?
-

4. Do you think international student in HAAGA- HELIA get enough peer support from other student to solve some problems they encounter
-

5. Do you think International student with poor language skills get enough peer support from their peers while studying at HAAGA-HELIA?
-

INTEGRATION

1. To what extent do you think the current social activities in HAAGA –HELIA help to integrate international student better
-

2. Kindly describe how sporting activities in HAAGA-HELIA has been helpful in promoting multiculturalism amongst international and local student
-

3. How would you advise international student having difficulty integrating while studying at HAAGA –HELIA

Attachment 2



Figure 1. The six dimensions model of wellness (Hettler 1976)

Attachment 3

FIGURE 2 .The Scientific Base Framework for person –centered key social and emotional learning competencies

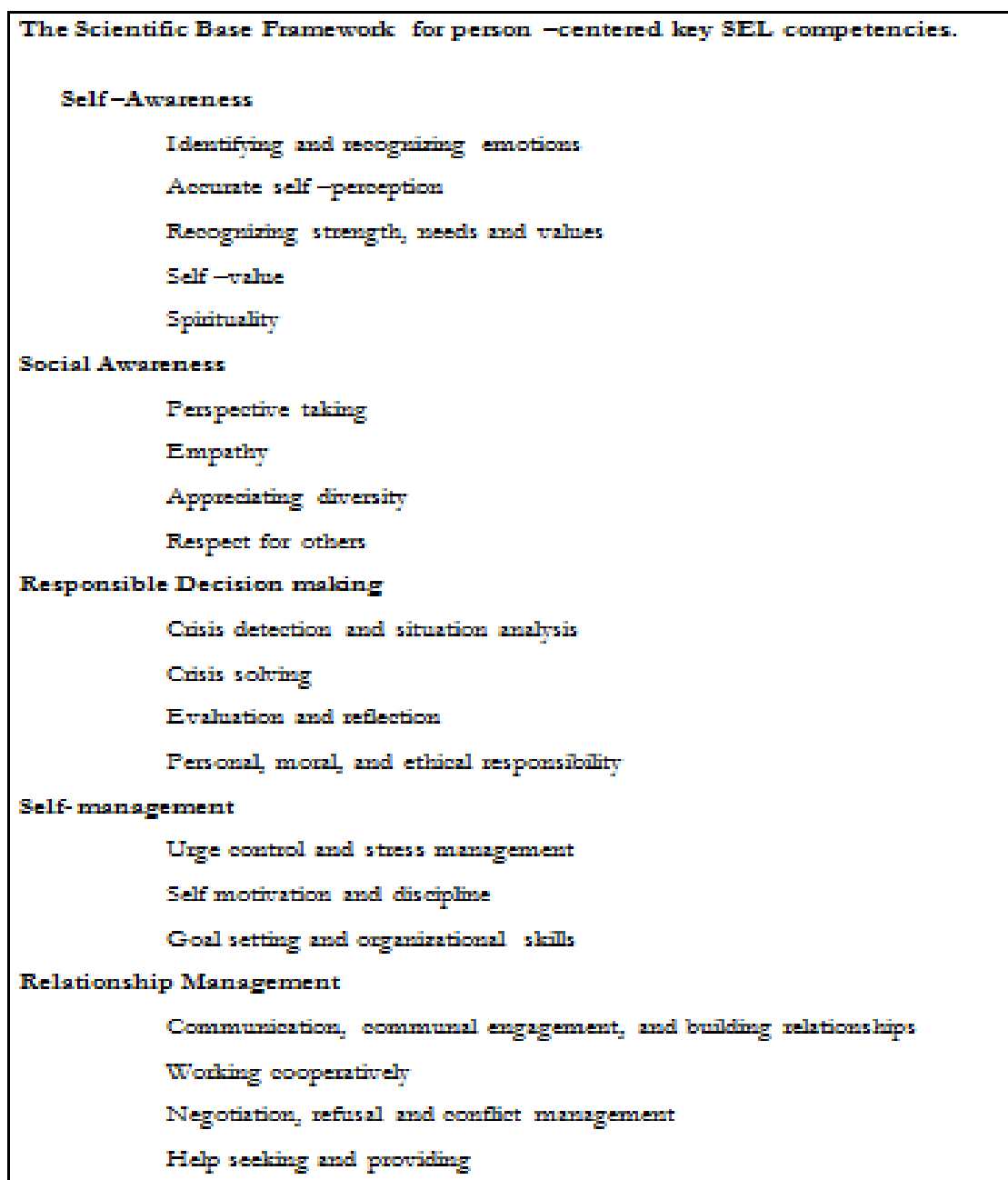


Figure 2. Building academic success on social and emotional learning (Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg & Walberg 2004.)

Attachment 4

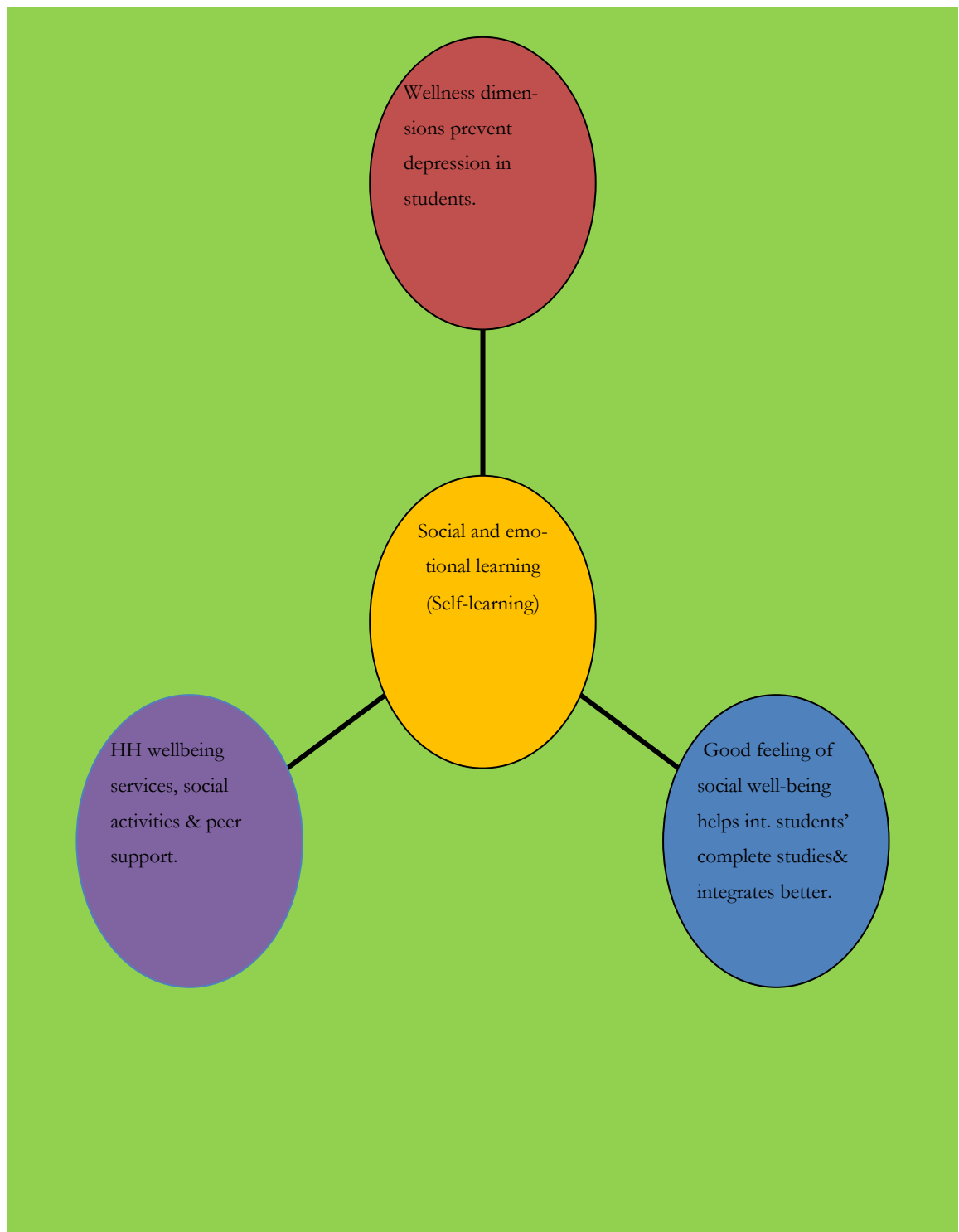


Figure 3. My proposed model for international students.

Attachment 5

HELSINKI CITY QUESTIONNEER

Dear student,

The purpose of student health care is to take care of students' physical and mental health as a whole. We aim to support you in your studies and help you to qualify in the field you have chosen.

The purpose of this student health questionnaire is to ask you about things related to your studies and other aspects of your life. We would like you to answer all of the questions. The information you give will only be handled by student health care professionals who have an obligation to keep everything confidential.

PERSONAL INFORMA- TION	Name and class code		Date of birth
	<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>
	Telephone	E-mail	
	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	
Address			
<input type="text"/>			

INSTRUCTIONS FOR ANSWERING:

Reply by choosing a number between 0 and 100 or by putting an X in the box that best describes your situation. Use the open questions to mention anything that you are concerned about.

Use the numbers 0 to 100 in your assessments. 0 means the worst possible situation you can imagine and 100 the best possible one. Numbers below 50 mean the situation is poor, while those above 50 mean it is good.

		Your assessment
1 STUDIES	1.1. How has the start of your studies gone? How would you say your studies are going on the whole?	<input type="text"/>

1.2. If your studies have not gone as well as you wanted, have you tried doing something to improve things? If yes, please tell us what it was.

2 HEALTH	2.1. How is your health?	<input type="text"/>
--------------------	---------------------------------	----------------------

2.2. Do you have any long-term (chronic) illnesses, symptoms or troublesome problems? If yes, please specify.

2.3. What medicines do you take regularly?

2.4. What do you think about your relationship to food? Have you got any problems related to eating?

2.5. Describe whether you get enough rest and sleep.

The number describing my alertness:

How many hours on average do you sleep on weeknights?

How many hours on average do you sleep on weekends?

2.6. How is your mood? The number 0 means that nothing has made you interested or happy for a long time; you feel completely depressed all the time. The number 100 means your mood is positive and happy all the time.

The number describing my mood:



City of Helsinki
Health Centre

STUDENT HEALTH QUESTIONNAIRE

2

2.7. How much anxiety do you think you have? Number 0 refers to a situation where you feel constantly very anxious and stressed. Number 100 means that you do not feel anxious at all and you always feel very relaxed.

The number describing my anxiety:

Do you only feel anxiety or stress in certain situations? What are they?

Your
assessment

2.8. Describe your alcohol and intoxicant use. The number 0 refers to a situation where you use alcohol or other intoxicants every day and in such large quantities that you cannot cope with your studies or personal relationships. 100 means that you do not use alcohol or intoxicants at all.

The number describing your alcohol or intoxicant use:

2.9. Do you smoke? If you do, how much?

Do you use snuff? If you do, how much?

2.10. How happy are you with your life? If you think about your life on the whole, what sort of a mark or grade would you give?

The number describing your satisfaction with your life at the moment:

2.11. If some of the issues mentioned above are not the way you would like them to be, have you tried doing something to improve things? If yes, please tell us what it was.

3

PERSONAL RELATION- SHIPS, FREE TIME AND WORK

3.1. How happy are you with your personal relationships? What sort of a mark or grade would you give your personal relationships as a whole?

The number describing your personal relationships:

3.2. As in the previous questions, pick a number between 0 and 100 to describe the way you spend your free time. The number 0 means that you never have anything to do in your free time. 100 means all your free time is spent in pleasurable activities with your hobbies or something else you find important and meaningful.

The number describing how you spend your free time:

3.3. As in the previous questions, pick a number between 0 and 100 to describe your sports and exercise habits. 0 means hardly any exercise at all, 100 means active participation in competitive sports.

The number describing your sports and exercise habits:

I exercise approximately hours per week

□

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STUDENT HEALTH QUESTIONNAIRE

3

3.4. How do you spend your time when you are not involved in your studies?

3.5. Rank the most important things in your life by giving them numbers; the most important thing is marked with the number 1. You can also write down comments if you wish.

Sports and exercise

Work

<input type="checkbox"/>	Hobbies	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Family, children	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Relationship with partner / spouse	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Friends	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other, please specify	<input type="checkbox"/>

3.6. If some of the issues mentioned above are not the way you would like them to be, have you tried doing something to improve things? If yes, please tell us what it was.

4
CONTACT
WITH
STUDENT
SUPPORT
STAFF

Is there anything else on your mind that you would like to raise here?

